

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

August 9, 2001, 9 p.m.-4 p.m.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.

The August 9, 2001 Implementation Team meeting, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed during the call, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management. Cathy Hlebechuk said there have been 17 TMT meetings and conference calls since May 3. There have also been six emergency TMT meetings in that time, most having to do with spill operations. At the last regular TMT meeting on August 1, it was decided to continue to release full powerhouse capacity (about 10 Kcfs) from Dworshak and 6 Kcfs from Libby.

There was an emergency TMT meeting yesterday to discuss the summer spill operation, Hlebechuk said; spill started on July 24 at The Dalles and Bonneville. At yesterday's meeting, the decision was made to increase spill to 50 Kcfs around the clock at Bonneville and to 40% of total river flow around the clock at The Dalles. The Corps has some concerns about how long this operation can last, given the need to meet the FCRPS system reliability storage target of 28,000 MW-months on October 1, Hlebechuk said; at best, spill will continue through August 31. The total spill program would be about 440 MW-months if it runs through August 31. Hlebechuk noted that around-the-clock

spill will begin tonight at Bonneville Dam.

The spring spill program started May 16 and ended June 15 at Bonneville and The Dalles, with spill starting a little later at John Day and McNary, Hlebechuk said. Bonneville spilled 50 Kcfs around the clock, The Dalles spilled 30% of total river flow around the clock, John Day spilled 30% of total river flow during nighttime hours, and McNary spilled 30 Kcfs every other night. The spring spill program totaled 600 MW-months, Hlebechuk said. She added that the TMT Guidelines and Water Management Plan have now been finalized, with the exception of the emergency protocols, which are still being discussed.

Total January-July runoff was 58.2 MAF at The Dalles, 58% of normal, the second-lowest water year on record, Hlebechuk said.

The group discussed potential mitigation measures to be implemented in response to this water year; actions currently under discussion are an expanded Northern pikeminnow bounty program and improvements at Dworshak National Fish Hatchery, which are expected to be completed by December 2002. Is there anything else that could be done this year? Ruff asked. We have discussed a deeper draft at Dworshak, but that has generated opposition from Idaho and the Nez Perce Tribe, Hlebechuk replied; we could also consider additional spill next year.

Silverberg suggested that mitigation is a very complex issue to raise without giving the IT an opportunity to prepare, and suggested that the IT participants think about it for discussion at the next meeting. Doug Arndt noted that NMFS plans to review the 2001 fish passage season, including the effects of reservoir operations and the 2001 spill program; that process may well suggest some additional mitigation opportunities. Ruff said he would expect the TMT to play a role in developing the technical information needed for this review. He asked the TMT to develop a post-season review presentation for a future IT meeting.

Bill Tweit said Washington is particularly interested in the effects of the 2001 operation on upriver bright fall chinook, and in talking about ways to mitigate the potentially disastrous impacts of the 2001 operation on that stock.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). No WQT Update was presented at today's meeting.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). No SCT update was presented at today's meeting.

E. TMDL Update. Rick Parkin reported that the most significant recent happening on the TMDL front was two workshops on the modeling work being done in support of the TMDL development process, held July 23-24 in Spokane and Portland. About 50 people attended each

session. At the workshops, EPA presented temperature information, and the states discussed their TDG work, Parkin said; Oregon even distributed early review copies of their draft lower river TDG TMDL, soliciting comments prior to developing a formal draft TMDL. Parkin said two additional workshops have been scheduled, one in October and one in December, one at which EPA will discuss the problem assessment and numerical targets being developed for the TMDL, the other to discuss the load allocations that will be included in the temperature and gas TMDLs.

When will you have a preliminary waste load allocations developed? Ruff asked. We're hoping to have a draft TMDL for public distribution by February 1; a preliminary draft may be available as early as December, Parkin replied. We could probably give the IT a briefing in December or January, Parkin said. If you could put that on your calendar, the IT would be interested in having that briefing, Silverberg said. Parkin said he will do so.

F. Federal Caucus Update. Ruff said the Federal Caucus has directed the federal hydro work group to develop an assessment of the lessons learned from the 2001 water year. The work group has been thinking about that topic, Ruff said, about how things went and how they could be improved in future drought years. Ruff said the IT's input would be very useful to this exercise.

The goal is to develop a discussion paper about what occurred in 2001, and what could be improved, in terms of operations, if we ever encounter another water year like we had this year, Ruff said. The specific questions the discussion paper is intended to address include the following:

- What were the overall lessons learned in 2001 operations?
- Should the 2001 emergency operating criteria be modified, and, if so, how should the criteria be changed for future use?
- What additional tools are available to address 2001 conditions if they occur again?
- What additional steps should be considered to ensure that generation and transmission resources are adequate to meet load under a range of water and market conditions without interrupting fishery operations?
- How well did the coordination process work in 2001, considering the Executive-level interaction and in view of the existing NMFS Regional Forum process? What process improvements are needed?

We would like to be able to combine the "lessons learned" paper with the annual progress review, probably in October, Ruff added. Doug Arndt noted that the problems that occurred in 2001 actually began in 2000; he added that, in his opinion, the region is still in the emergency situation, and will be until the weather pattern normalizes.

Anyway, we would like the IT's input for this paper, Ruff said. He agreed to type up and e-mail the list of questions to be considered in the paper to the IT participants.

Jim Fodrea noted that all of the federal action agencies have now signed their Records of

Decision with respect to the NMFS and Fish and Wildlife Service 2000 Biological Opinions. Those RODs will be posted to the salmonrecovery.gov website soon, he said; by this Monday at the latest. Hard copies of the RODs are also available by calling 888/921-4886.

3. Five-Year Implementation Plan Overview.

BPA's Katherine Cheney said the Regional Executives asked the action agencies to develop a "document roadmap" explaining the relationships between the many opinion papers, Biological Opinions, decision documents, implementation plans and Environmental Impact Statements now being implemented, reviewed or slated for imminent delivery; this "roadmap" is attached as Enclosure C. Cheney spent a few minutes going through this chart, as well as a brief description of each of the key documents (the "All-H" Paper, the 2000 NMFS Biological Opinion, the 2000 USFWS Biological Opinion, the various action agency decision documents, the FCRPS implementation plans, the 2001 FCRPS operations plan, the BPA Fish and Wildlife Implementation EIS, the Upper Columbia Flood Control [VAR Q] EIS, the Banks Lake EIS, the Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Study EIS and the Cultural Resources Compliance EIS).

Cheney said the goal of today's briefing was to touch on the key sections of the draft Implementation Plan; she noted that the public comment period on this document will continue through September 7. Cheney distributed copies of the draft Five-Year Implementation Plan (available as Enclosure E), noting that additional copies are available upon request.

Cheney, Adele Merchant, Jim Fodrea, Bill Maslen, John Skidmore, Jim Gieselman and Ken Barnhardt then provided an overview of the draft FCRPS Five-Year Implementation Plan, working from a series of overheads (Enclosure F). They touched on the following main topics:

- The purpose of the Implementation Plan
- The link between goals, performance standards, strategies, actions, criteria, five-year action tables, the annual action plans and research, monitoring and evaluation
- The specific goals of the Implementation Plan
- A sample performance standard
- Implementation plan strategies for hydro, habitat, hatcheries, harvest and RM&E
- How regional coordination will occur
- How priorities will be set among actions
- An Implementation Plan timeline
- Cost and funding issues

The presentation concluded with the following key considerations:

- Avoidance of jeopardy and All-H approach require contributions from a number of federal agencies

- Biological Opinions for federal agencies are interdependent
- Due to past investments and improvements, the FCRPS can only provide 5 to 10 percent survival improvement with dams in place
- Other survival improvements are necessary, emphasizing habitat and hatchery actions
- All survival improvements are likely to be incremental – there is no silver bullet
- A comprehensive, All-H approach provides the best prospect for avoiding jeopardy.

Please refer to Enclosures E and F for details of this presentation.

The action agencies are taking a priority basin approach to habitat improvement activities, Tweit observed. Correct, Merchant replied. How does that work, relative to the criteria you will use? Tweit asked. That's unclear at this point, Merchant replied; there are 62 subbasins being considered under the Council process, so, clearly, assigning priorities is going to be a very important task. Also, said Tweit, what happens if you fail to make progress in the first priority subbasin during the first 12 months – do you roll on to the next priority subbasin? No, Fodrea replied – most of the activities we're funding will continue for several years. Further dialogue on the offsite mitigation subbasin selection criteria would probably be useful, Tweit noted.

Kim Kratz of NMFS briefly described the five criteria used to develop NMFS' list of 16 priority subbasins; he then moved on to the question of how the next priority subbasins (after the initial three) in which actions will occur will be selected. He noted that Reclamation will take the lead in initiating actions in three of the 16 priority subbasins per year, so that, within 10 years, work will be underway or completed in all 16 priority subbasins.

Tony Nigro said it is important for this document to emphasize that habitat actions will also occur in other subbasins besides the 16 identified by NMFS as the highest priority. The action agencies need to be sensitive to the perception that nothing is going to happen in the 46 “non-priority” subbasins, Nigro said. How will it be decided what will happen, and when, in the other 46 subbasins? Ruff asked – that's the key question. Nigro noted that all of the subbasins have habitat problems, so it is important to avoid the perception that restoration activities will occur only in the priority subbasins. Kratz noted that the main criteria used in selecting the 16 subbasins was the density of water-related diversions, adding that NMFS expects the Council process to yield decisions that will guide restoration-related funding and activities.

Tweit observed that there may be a disconnect between the proposed reliance on the Council process and the need for direct coordination between the action agencies and the states and tribes. Cheney replied that the Regional Executives have been discussing that question; a steering committee has been formed to develop an agenda for the next Regional Executives meeting, which is expected to focus almost exclusively on that issue. John Palensky noted that NMFS has committed, to the greatest extent feasible, to use existing processes to make these kinds of project prioritization decisions. He added that, ultimately, it will be up to Bonneville to decide what they are going to fund. Maslen agreed that the intent is not to reinvent the wheel.

These are very helpful questions and comments, Cheney said; the coordination issue is particularly important, because the states, tribes and federal action agencies are going to be in this together for at least 10 years. She asked that the other IT participants provide any additional questions or comments directly to her, as soon as possible.

In response to another question from Tweit, Maslen said he will find out which safety-net hatchery program implementation actions the action agencies will be willing to fund, and will report back to the IT, after first contacting Tweit and Nigro directly.

The group devoted an extensive discussion to the research, monitoring and evaluation component of the Implementation Plan. Nigro pointed out the need for close coordination and integration with ongoing and upcoming state and Power Planning Council RM&E efforts.

The discussion then turned to implementation funding; Nigro said it would be helpful if the action agencies could clearly state, in the Implementation Plan, whether they are assuming status-quo funding levels, or significantly-increased funding availability over the next 10 years. Cheney said the action agencies' intent is to provide a more detailed assessment of implementation funding prospects in the next draft of the plan. In response to another question, Cheney said the next draft of the Plan will also include a list of specific activities, with associated cost estimates and agency responsibilities.

Cheney reiterated her request that the IT provide any additional comments on the Implementation Plan to her as soon as possible. She noted that Page 67 of the main Five-Year Implementation Plan document contains a series of questions for reviewers to consider. We look forward to seeing your written comments, she said.

Is there some reason you have specified a 30-day review period, when it has taken you so long to get this draft plan out for review? Nigro asked. We're always interested in your comments, Cheney replied; if you don't get your comments in by September 7, we will address them in the next draft of the plan – this is a living document. Maslen added that the September 7 comment due-date is driven by the end of the fiscal year on September 30.

4. Draft BPA Fish and Wildlife EIS.

Molly Moreland of BPA led this presentation. She began by noting that one comment the action agencies have heard repeatedly is that it would be time well spent for them to think about how all of the various processes in the region fit together. BPA has been working on that very problem for the past three years, Moreland said; the result is the draft Fish and Wildlife EIS (available from Moreland at 503/230-7579). BPA is now seeking comments on this document, Moreland said.

This is not the be-all and end-all of our NEPA process, Moreland said; we will, however, be tying all future fish and wildlife funding back to this document. She added that the comment period on this document has been extended to August 31. Moreland noted that public open-house meetings on

the draft EIS have been scheduled for Clarkston, Washington on August 14, Seattle on August 15, Boise on August 21 and Kalispell on August 22.

What kinds of comments is BPA after, given the sheer size of this document and of the Five-Year Implementation Plan? Steve Pettit asked. That is a huge amount of verbiage to review, given the fact that you expect all comments to be submitted in the next month or so. We would like comments on its completeness, Moreland replied; if there are proposals or projects we've missed, we need to know about that. The other area where we're asking for comments is on the sections that cover the individual reviewers' area of expertise – hatcheries, harvest, cultural resources etc. It would also be helpful to know whether or not you agree with our assessment of the environmental consequences of the actions covered in the document, she added.

What's the schedule for finalizing this and issuing the Record of Decision? Fodrea asked. I'm somewhat hesitant to specify a timeline, Moreland replied, but we hope to issue the final draft by November.

5. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next Implementation Team meeting was set for Thursday, September 6. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA writer-editor pool.